

Cuban Seaman Charged In Seven Seas Murders

MIAMI, Fla. (AP) — A 35-year-old Cuban seaman was charged Wednesday night with slaying his captain and four crewmen and then pirating the island freighter Seven Seas.

A U.S. commissioner signed the federal warrant after Washington officials decided the U.S. government had jurisdiction over the refugee, Roberto Ramirez.

Admits Killing

Federal officials said the father of three daughters still in Cuba admitted he ran amok on the decks of the freighter after an argument with the captain about Fidel Castro.

Three of the crewmen were shot to death while they slept. The captain apparently was murdered on the bridge and thrown overboard. A fifth crewman also apparently was tossed to the sharks.

A sixth seaman on the converted schooner, the cook, is missing. It is believed he jumped overboard to escape Ramirez' blazing gun.

Five Murder Counts

The federal warrant contains five counts of murder. The charge of piracy was lodged because Ramirez took control of the ship and sailed for two hours toward Cuba, according to Asst. U.S. Atty. Aaron Foosner.

It was either "them or me," Ramirez reportedly told federal officials after he was fished out of the gulf Stream Tuesday by a German freighter.

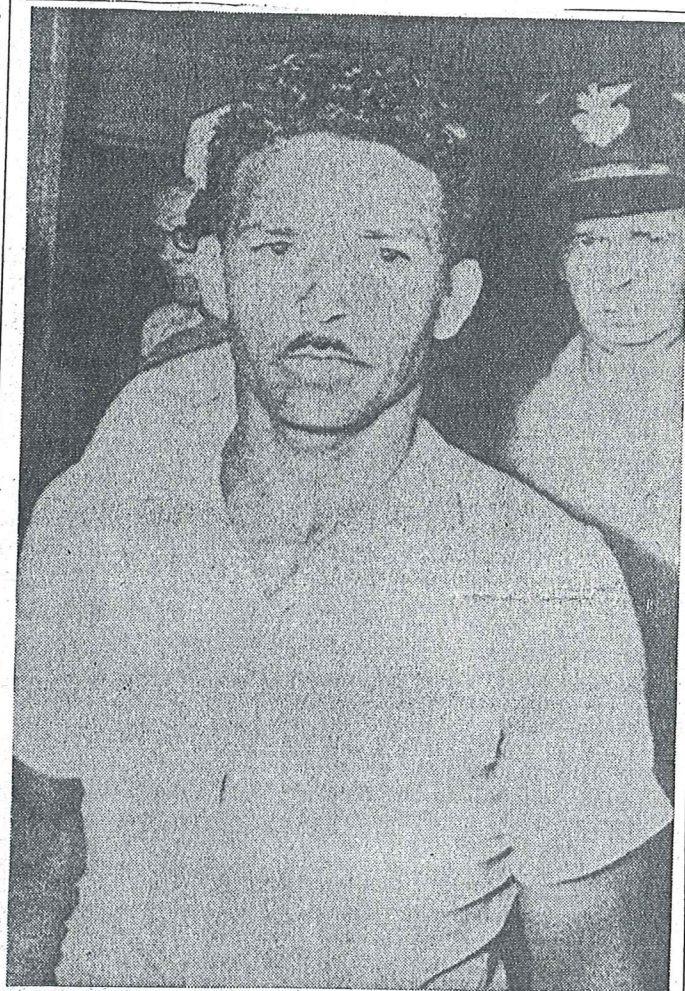
He was in a 14-foot aluminum skiff he lowered over the side of the disabled Seven Seas after it ran out of fuel.

He was still carrying a 38-caliber pistol, believed to be the murder weapon, and a baby food jar full of silver-tipped bullets.

Complex Situation

For more than a day and a half, Washington officials studied the complexity of jurisdiction:

Who can try a resident alien believed to have committed murder on the high seas aboard a Panamanian-registered vessel owned by a Miami-based company?



CHARGED — Cuban refugee Roberto Ramirez, 35, last night was charged by the federal government in the slaying of the captain of the Seven Seas cargo ship and four of the crewmen. Officials say Ramirez told them he shot the men Sunday night and abandoned the ship in a rowboat. He was picked up by a freighter Monday. This photo shows Ramirez as he was taken to an Immigration Department detention compound at Miami, Fla., Monday night.